

chose for their king one whom they
renamed by the
general nickname given to them all
—'Jacques Bon-
homme'; whom in mockery of his kingship
the victorious
Dauphin crowned with a red-hot trivet in
the end, before
hanging him. So here the English peasant
likewise finds
a leader, an incarnation, an ideal—Piers
Plowman; whose
humble stature grows, as dream merges
into dream, until
he is boldly revealed as no other than
Christ Himself. It
is only this simple ploughman who can guide
the pilgrims
who seek the road to Truth; just as in real
life and in
years soon to come another peasant, Joan
the Maid, was
to lead France along the road to Liberty.⁶

And the new Gospel of this new Messiah? It
is the same
as the old. Love is all *the triacle (treacle,
salve) of
hevene*.

*Disce, quod (quoth) he, doce * iilige inimicos.*

Lerne to love, quod Kynde (Nature) • and leve of
alle othre'.

For, without love—

Ye ne have no more meryte * in masse ne (nor) in
houres,
Than Malkyn of hire maydenhode • that no man
desireth.

It is deeds that matter, more than any
creeds. It is Truth
himself who sends Piers a pardon of un-
Roman simplicity—'Those who have done good shall go
into eternal
life, those who have done evil into
eternal flame.' A

⁶To modern readers of the poem this pilgrimage
to find Truth,
led by a ploughman, seems the extreme of unreal
allegory; it is worth
remembering that it would seem far less fantastic in a
century which
had witnessed that strange movement of the

*pastoureaux' (shep-
herds) from Northern France through Paris to the
south in 1320.
Led by an unfrocked priest and an apostate monk,
leaving their
flocks and herds of swine to look after themselves
and carrying only
staff and scrip, they set out to recover the Holy Land
—a task they
believed reserved for them alone. After religiously
massacring all the
Jews on their way, they were cut to pieces by troops
at Toulouse and
strung up by twenties and thirties on the trees.
(Michelet, v. 6.)